

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6598
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 1748

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OREP (CODEL DIGGS, WHALEN AND SOLARZ)
SUBJECT: CODEL DIGGS, WHALEN, AND SOLARZ MEETING WITH FOREIGN
MINISTER DJERMAKOYE

1. SUMMARY. MEETING WITH CODEL DIGGS INFORMALLY AT HIS
RESIDENCE APRIL 14, FOREIGN MINISTER DJERMAKOYE UNDERLINED
MILITARY GOVERNMENT'S PREOCCUPATION WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOP-
MENT AND ITS DISINTEREST IN POLITICAL RHETORIC AND DOCTRINAIRE
SOLUTIONS TO AFRICAN PROBLEMS. DJERMAKOYE SAID NIGER IS
SEEKING TO PLAY MEDIATING ROLE ON REGIONAL ISSUES LIKE LIBYA-
CHAD BORDER PROBLEM. HE REITERATED NIGER'S SUPPORT FOR ZAIRE,
NOTING THAT EVEN THOUGH DETAILS OF WHAT IS HAPPENING IN SHABA
ARE UNCLEAR, ZIARE IS A LEGITIMATE AFRICAN GOVERNMENT AND THAT
THE OAU PRINCIPLE OF TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY IS DIRECTLY INVOLVED.
DJERMAKOYE THANKED THE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE
AND SAID CONTINUING ECONOMIC COOPERATION IS THE BEST WAY FOGF
THE U.S. TO DEMONSTRATE ITS SUPPORT FOR AFRICA.

END SUMMARY.
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2. DJERMAKOYE: WE ARE PLEASED BY YOUR VISIT HERE HOWEVER
SHORT. YOU ARE MOST WELCOME IN NIGER.
DIGGS: WE KNOW THAT YOU HAVE BEEN TRAVELLING ESTENSIVELY--
TO NEW DELHI FOR THE NAAC AND SOON TO DAKAR FOR THE FRANCO-
AFRICAN SUMMIT. WE ARE INTERESTED IN YOUR VIEWS ON THSE
CONFERENCES AS WELL AS ON THE SITUATION IN ZIARE.

DJERMAKOYE: FIRST LET ME EXPLAIN NIGER'S GENERAL POLICIES. THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN IN POWER THREE YEARS. OUR MAIN CONCERN IS THE SITUATION IN NIGER. WE INHERITED A MESS. OUR PREOCCUPATION IS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. WE ARE NOT INTERESTED IN POLITICS FOR POLITICS' SAKE AND WE REFUSE TO PLAY THAT KIND OF GAME INTERNALLY OR ABROAD EVEN THOUGH MANY OTHER AFRICAN STATES DO. WE PARTICIPATE IN THE NON-ALIGNED ON THE BASIS OF OUR OWN PHILOSOPHY OF INDEPENDENCE. MANY OF THE NON-ALIGNED ARE, OF COURSE, NOT NON-ALIGNED AT ALL. NIGER IS NOT A STRONG COUNTRY AND CANNOT BRING MUCH PRESSURE TO BEAR BUT IT IS DETERMINED TO PLAN ITS OWN INDEPENDENT ROLE.

REGIONALISM IS IMPORTANT FOR US AND WE SEEK COOPERATION WITH OUR NEIGHBORS THROUGH MECHANISMS LIKE CILSS, ECOWAS, AND CEAO WHICH ARE THE BEST WAY OF MAKING OURSELVES HEARD. WE FOLLOW A POLICY OF OFFERING WISE COUNSEL AND MODERATION ON REGIONAL DISPUTES. WE PLAYED A MEDIATING ROLE ON MALI-UPPER VOLTA BORDER PROBLEMS AND ARE TRYING TO DO THE SAME AT PRESENT WITH LIBYA AND CHAD.

3. DJERMAKOYE (CONTINUED): NIGER SUPPORTS MOBUTU'S REQUEST TO FRANCE AND MOROCCO FOR HELP. I STATED THIS POSITION PUBLICLY IN MY PRESS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY. WHATEVER ONE THINKS OF MOBUTU, ZAIRE IS AN ORGANIZED AND LEGITIMATE AFRICAN STATE. TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, A FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF THE OAU, IS DIRECTLY INVOLVED.

4. DJERMAKOYE (CONTINUED): AGAIN, LET ME EXTEND THANKS FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE DURING THE DROUGHT AND AFTER. YOUR ONGOING AND LONGER-TERM PROJECTS ARE IMPORTANT, ESPECIALLY

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THE NIGER CEREALS PROJECT WHICH IS VALUABLE TO US. WE HOPE YOUR ASSISTANCE KEEPS MOVING IN THIS DIRECTION, NOT ONLY HERE BUT IN ALL STATES OF THE SAHEL. THIS IS THE BEST WAY FOR YOU TO HELP AFRICA SOLVE ITS PROBLEMS.

DIGGS: THANK YOU. I AM PERSONALLY INTERESTED IN ZAIRE. THE PROBLEM SEEMS ONE OF A MILITARY GOVERNMENT WITH AN ARMY 20,000 STRONG, HEAVILY ASSISTED BY OURSELVES AND OTHERS OVER THE YEARS, BEING UNABLE TO COPE WITH A FORCE, ACCORDING TO BEST INTELLIGENCE AVAILABLE, NUMBERING ONLY PERHAPS 3 OR 4,000. WOULD NIGER, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVE TO ASK FOR HELP TO REPULSE SUCH A FORCE ARMED ONLY WITH CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS? MY REAL CONCERN IS THE WILL OF THE ANZ. IT NEEDS HELP NOW, IT MAY NEED MORE LATER. WHEN WILL THE REQUESTS END? AND DON'T WE RISK GETTING DEEPER INTO A CONFLICT WHICH MAY ASSUME IDEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS AND PULL SUPER-POWERS DEEPER INTO CENTRAL AFRICA?

DJERMAKOYE: ADMITTEDLY WE LACK INFORMATION ABOUT EVENTS IN SHABA, BUT IT'S MORE THAN AN INTERNAL PROBLEM. AS A MILITARY MAN, I CAN TELL YOU 3 OR 4,000 WELL-ARMED TROOPS CAN BE A MATCH FOR 40,000. NIGER WOULD CERTAINLY

ASK HELP FROM ITS FRIENDS IN THIS SITUATION.

SOLARZ: WHAT IF IT WERE CLEAR THAT THE KATANGANS' OBJECTIVE IS NOT SECESSION BUT SIMPLY THE OVERTHROW OF MOBUTU? ALTERNATIVELY, WHAT IF SOVIETS AND CUBANS ARE NOT FIGHTING AND IF THE KATANGAS SIMPLY WANT TO GO HOME. IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ZAIRE AND ZIMBABWE WHERE THERE IS ALSO FIGHTING ACROSS BORDERS. AFRICANS DO NOT TREAT THIS AS AN INVASION BECAUSE THE OUTSIDE FORCES ARE ZIMBABWIAN AND ZIMBABWIANS WANT TO GO HOME.

DJERMAKOYE: ZAIRE IS MORE THAN AN INTERNAL SITUATION. IF KATANGANS ONLY WANT TO OVERTHROW MOBUTU, WHY DON'T THEY GO TO KINSHASA AND FIGHT THERE? IN ANY CASE, ZIMBABWE IS DIFFERENT. IT IS NOT A RECOGNIZED AFRICAN STATE. A WAR OF LIBERATION IS GOING ON. ON ZIMBABWE, WE FAVOR RECONCILIATION OF ALL AFRICAN FACTIONS INSIDE AND OUT, NOT JUST PATRIOTIC FRONT. IN ZIMBABWE WE SHOULD TRY TO AVOID ANOTHER ANGOLA WHERE A MINORITY WITH AFRICAN SUPPORT SUCCEEDED IN IMPLANTING

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ITSELF IN POWER. IT'S DIFFICULT FOR ME TO SUGGEST WHAT THE U.S. SHOULD DO IN ZAIRE, BUT FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, PRINCIPLE OF TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY FOR MANY STATES IN AFRICA IS INVOLVED. JAMES

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